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Thursday, 30 September 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rakhmanov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize

The Acting President *(spoke in Russian)*: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize.

The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President *(spoke in Russian)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, His Excellency The Honourable Said Musa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Musa (Belize): We are fortunate that the great skills and integrity displayed by His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, both as freedom fighter and as Foreign Minister of Namibia, will now be at the disposal of the General Assembly. We desperately need those qualities as we wrestle with the challenges that now face our Organization.

We are enriched by the presence of our three new Members, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

We look forward to the coming millennium with great expectations born out of the many great accomplishments of this century, not least of which has been the creation and preservation of the United Nations. But we would be deceiving ourselves if we did not recognize that the world of peace and security envisioned by the drafters of the Charter is as far from achievement as it was at the beginning of this tormented century.

This has indeed been a century of extremes. We have witnessed marvelous scientific and technological advances that could liberate humankind from the drudgery and misery that have always been its lot. At the same time, we have seen more billions spent on means of destruction than on the construction of a better life for the billions who still live in poverty.

We have witnessed the spread of democracy around the globe, even as inequality between and within nations grows unabated and countless millions of lives are wasted. All too apparent are the tragic victims of the invisible hand of the market.

How much has inequality grown during this century? The 1999 *Human Development Report* of the

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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) tells us that the income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth living in the poorest was 11 to 1 in 1913. This had grown to 30 to 1 by 1960, 60 to 1 in 1990, and 74 to 1 in 1997. The report concludes in its "Overview", at page 2, that

> "When the market goes too far in dominating social and political outcomes, the opportunities and rewards of globalization spread unequally and inequitably — concentrating power and wealth in a select group of people, nations and corporations, marginalizing the others."

The solution, it posits, is not to stop the expansion of global markets, but to create and enforce the rules for stronger governance, both national and global, to ensure that globalization works for people, not just for profits. This crying need for good global governance is not being answered, and it is one of the most important and fundamental tasks facing the United Nations today.

During this century there have been two concerted attempts to collectively provide the framework for a new world order, following periods of catastrophic human behaviour. After the First World War the Versailles Treaty and the Paris Conference created the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and certain economic arrangements. After the Second World War we had the United Nations and the Bretton Woods agreements, which again created new institutional arrangements for regulating a new world order. One of the results of that reordering was the ushering in of the era of decolonization, whereby dozens of countries have emerged and formed part of the family of nations, bringing our number in the United Nations up to 188.

Today we have witnessed a real change in the world order no less far-reaching and momentous than the first two, with the end of the cold war, the creation of a unipolar world and the phenomena of globalization and trade liberalization. And still we have not been able to sit together and negotiate universally accepted rules and institutions that are workable and fair for regulating this new order. How can we speak of the victory of democracy in this situation?

The institutions that, more than national governments, govern the real lives of billions today — the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the G-7, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) — are dominated by a few rich and powerful countries, and there is no transparency, no accountability, no effective mechanism for civil society participation. In short, there is no good governance.

We, the developing countries, are constantly being urged by the international organizations, by the European Union and others, to practise good governance, and are threatened with sanctions if we do not. For our part, we in Belize and other developing countries accept the need for good governance and are doing our utmost to achieve it. It is time we ensured that these all-powerful organizations themselves practise good governance, abide by a global code of ethics that puts people before profits, respect the diversity of our countries and be fully accountable and transparent.

While we have made important advances in enlarging democracy at the national level, we have failed to do so at the global level. Our only hope lies with a reformed United Nations that will ensure that the global institutions that determine the quality of our lives are made democratic and just.

Small countries like Belize are understandably concerned about the way in which globalization and trade liberalization are being mismanaged. Yes, we believe in the potential benefits of globalization. Yes, we want to be involved, but as partners, not as victims of larger, more powerful economic interests.

Belize became independent just 18 years ago. It has been said that we became independent just when independence ceased to be meaningful as a result of the power of international organizations and transnational companies to determine not just international, but also national economic and social policies.

Let me say this clearly: do not expect any of us who won our independence after years of struggle — some involving armed conflict and the sacrifice of many lives — to simply give it up and accept a new form of domination. But what does it mean, especially for small developing countries, to be independent in today's world? It means that we must find a way to make interdependence make independence meaningful.

This can best be done through effective regional organizations. In our own region, our vision is to work towards a real integration of the Central American and Caribbean countries, to make the Association of Caribbean States the means of inserting our countries into

the world economy with a stronger voice to secure fair terms of trade, greater market access and more beneficial investments.

The much vaunted new financial architecture that we seek to construct must be designed to enhance the independence of sovereign States. We can only do this through negotiated agreements that are fair, transparent and consensual and in which developing countries are given a real voice.

We are heartened by the words of Mike Moore, Director-General of the WTO, who told us, members of the Group of 77, at Marrakesh that he is totally committed to ensuring that the WTO be a family in which every member has an equal place at the table and that trade liberalization bring real benefits to all countries, but especially to developing countries.

We, the smaller and developing countries, must be the beneficiaries of unselfish actions on the part of our developed partners. We are aware that free trade can be kind to the strong and deadly to the weak, and so our call is this: Give us time to adjust and move our economies forward. Help us to develop our capacities and technologies to make our people competitive. We are challenged to narrow the gap between those who earn billions and those who work for pennies.

If we are to be successful at this, everyone must be included. Our political ideologies and differences will have to be put aside in the interest of the elimination of poverty. But none of this is possible if we do not face up to meeting the first objective of our institution: the achievement of world peace and security.

True, since the inception of our Organization there has not been another world war, but local and regional conflicts have taken a more vicious toll than the two world wars combined. If we are to prevent these human tragedies, we will have to move, in the words of our Secretary-General, from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention: preventive diplomacy, preventive disarmament, preventive deployment.

If only we had followed these prescriptions in East Timor, we could have prevented the large-scale massacres and destruction that were visited on an entire people in the presence of our United Nations Mission, which had assured them that they could exercise their right to self-determination in peace and security. None of us can feel comfortable with the fact that although international agencies in the field had warned of the impending massacre for months, nothing was done to prevent it. We still have the task of ensuring that the people of East Timor can live in peace and enjoy the benefits of their courageous decision to be independent, and Belize pledges its unconditional support for any measures taken by our Organization to this end.

We do not fail to recognize and applaud the tremendous success of the United Nations in the eradication of colonialism and occupation. How could we fail to do so, when the very existence of Belize as an independent State is due in no small part to the support of the United Nations? How could we fail to do so, when we recall the role of the United Nations in the independence of Namibia, whose Foreign Minister presides over our Assembly, or when we recall the work of the Fourth Committee in brokering the independence of so many of our present members? But the job is not over till it is over, not until all peoples of the world are guaranteed their right to self-determination and independence in peace and security. In this context, we look forward to welcoming Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations at the millennium summit and to achieving peace and security for all the peoples of that region.

As we leave this century of unparalleled suffering and violence, we look forward to creating a better world in the next. None of us can dare predict what awaits us. On the other hand, we must all commit ourselves to try to shape the future in ways that redound to the benefit of all human beings regardless of race, colour, sex, nationality, class, religion or political opinions.

We will not succeed in this if we do not succeed in eradicating poverty. Poverty, in the words of the President of the World Bank, is much more than a matter of income alone: the poor seek the sense of well-being which comes from peace of mind, from good health, community and safety, from choice and freedom as well as a steady source of income.

A necessary condition for the elimination of all forms of poverty is the creation of fair rules for trade and investment. As my Deputy Prime Minister said at the twenty-second special session, just recently concluded, the Seattle Round of negotiations must be characterized by a willingness to implement the necessary reforms to ameliorate the negative impact of the post-Uruguay arrangements. We — the small, vulnerable,

disadvantaged States — must benefit from trade liberalization along with our developed partners.

Those partners, however, must live up to the commitments they have made to the world over the past decades: it is scandalous that not only has the promise of dedicating 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to development assistance not been met, we are getting further from this goal every day, with barely 0.2 per cent of gross domestic product now being so dedicated.

Effective solidarity between the haves and the have nots is an essential part of the solution to the problems of marginalization and poverty. That is why we commend the actions of the Republic of China on Taiwan, which has not been reluctant to help less well-endowed countries. Taiwan is a good friend of Belize, and I would like to express here our deep condolences to the people of Taiwan for the tragic consequences of the earthquake that struck recently. It is our hope that the United Nations will be able to embrace the Republic of China on Taiwan in the family of nations, as part of a peaceful and just solution to the China question, one that respects the aspirations and rights of all Chinese people.

I would like to endorse the support of our Secretary-General for the concept of individual sovereignty in the sense of the right of every individual to control his or her own destiny. This, of course, presupposes a democratic world, one in which people have the right to participate in decisions that shape their lives. Indeed, such participation defines the very existence of people: I participate, therefore I am. But it is tantamount to putting Descartes before the horse if we do not recognize that people cannot participate effectively if they do not have access to education, to knowledge, to information. My Government has made the provision of such access its number one priority, and I urge the international community to focus its resources on assisting developing countries to empower their peoples through human-resource development programmes.

We have squandered billions of dollars and millions of lives in the real or imagined defence of State sovereignty; let us now resolve to dedicate our resources to education, the sine qua non for the realization of personal sovereignty. We all want a better, more just, more peaceful and secure world, and to achieve this we must have a world free of the culture of violence and instant gratification, from the scourge of drug-trafficking: we need a world of tolerance and solidarity. None of this is possible without education.

People everywhere, but especially in the underdeveloped countries, are asking what there is to celebrate as we enter the new millennium. The least we can do, the least we owe our people, is tell them the truth and face the reality together. Let us not pretend that the future is bright and untroubled, or that we have the answers to all the problems that plague humanity. Let us instead resolve to work together to harness the power of technology, of science, of the marketplace, so that they act for instead of against humanity.

Other speakers before me have called for a new century of human development, for the creation of a new global human order. This dream can become reality when, at last, the powerful agree to sit down with the rest of us as equals and together design the political, economic and social architecture that will ensure global prosperity along with global justice. Only then will the world live in peace and proclaim, in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

> "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

Amen.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, His Excellency Sheik Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani.

Sheik Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I extend my congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I wish him success in guiding the work of the Assembly.

It gives me great pleasure to extend my thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his effective work

as President of the Assembly at its previous session. I wish him similar success in his future endeavours.

Allow me on this occasion to congratulate the three new Members on their admission to the United Nations. Allow me also, on behalf of my Government, to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, for his tireless work and laudable efforts in the midst of an international situation that can be described — at best — as difficult and complicated.

Of course the international situation is truly difficult and complicated. It is no coincidence that as we meet in this forum to discuss the affairs and state of the world today — at this, the last session of the century, the beginning of a new century, a new age that we once hoped would be different from the old — we find ourselves obliged to discuss the same problems and the same disputes that we have been facing for over half a century. Is this not truly deplorable and even outrageous? Does not this reality constitute categorical evidence that all of us — States, peoples and regional and international organizations — have failed to learn enough from the lessons of the past, that we have not benefited from our past experiences enough and that we have not sought as much as we should have, to overcome our past limitations and shortcomings?

What do we see when we look at our world today? We see bloody conflicts that we have not yet been able to stop and chronic crises that still await solutions that would end the spiral of violence and suffering. Moreover, we find that the world remains reluctant or even unable to address problems and crises that are far removed, in terms of content, from the course of daily politics but whose effects and ramifications are no less dangerous than the topical crises and conflicts that threaten our existence. We must ask ourselves: What have we done, as we stand on the threshold of the third millennium, to prepare ourselves to meet the challenges of poverty, misery, unemployment, illiteracy, disease, the spread of epidemics and the exploitation of children?

What have we done to prepare ourselves to cope with the dangers of organized crime, international terrorism and drug trafficking? Have we really understood the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that they may be used at any time and anywhere?

What of the real dangers besetting our planet as a result of environmental degradation, climate change, the scarcity of water resources, the shortage of raw materials, the deteriorating phenomena of drought and desertification and the increasing frequency of natural disasters?

Have we at least begun to draft guidelines and comprehensive universal plans to confront these global threats, which do not differentiate between nationalities, races, colours or creeds and which most certainly recognize no political, geographical, economic and social borders among nations and peoples?

Simply put, have we, as States, Governments and international organizations, begun adjusting our priorities so as to place the goals of development, progress, education, health, high living standards and decent life for our peoples ahead of the aims of conflict, disputes and vengeance, no matter how historical, profound or sensitive?

I cannot answer yes to any of these questions. There is nothing in this statement to criticize anyone or detract from their resolve or intentions. It is a sad universal reality that requires our cooperation and joint efforts if we truly hope to prepare ourselves for the future and its tasks and changes. To that end, I see no better or more comprehensive framework for this mission than this international Organization, which we believe to be the qualified and appropriate institution for defining the future of our world. All of us, regardless of our interests and our narrow, topical political calculations, must provide the United Nations and its agencies with all the means necessary for it to play such an important role.

We are convinced that this can be achieved only with universal will, for in the final analysis, the United Nations is the sum total of its Member States. We are also convinced of the need to reform the United Nations and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its bodies and agencies. Similarly, it is incumbent upon us, the States Members of the Organization, to assume our political responsibility and respect our moral and financial commitments to it. Furthermore, in this context, we support the idea of expanding the Security Council to make it more democratic and representative of the international community in the modern world. We also support the idea of expanding the permanent membership of the Council so as to ensure greater universal representation on it. The same applies to restricting the use of the veto by the permanent members and to regulating the capacity to use this right under agreed and specific terms and conditions.

It is perhaps not exaggerated optimism or expectation on my part when I say that we consider this to be an essential and vital step towards consecrating the sound concept of globalization, as we see it and as it must be in the twenty-first century. We believe that globalization must be a comprehensive mechanism in the service of the general welfare of all nations and peoples. If its benefits are confined to certain States and societies, to the exclusion of others, it will fail to achieve its objectives.

On this basis, we believe that globalization should be the means by which we promote cooperation, interaction and openness among the peoples and societies of the world. We can thus steer globalization away from the pitfalls of narrow exploitation and short-term profit and towards a universal scope whose benefits and returns reach everyone. It is here that we feel that a new and extremely vital role will emerge for the United Nations in the twenty-first century — a role in which the Organization will assume leadership of the trend towards globalization and consecrate it, especially in the fields of cooperation, cultural and educational exchanges, social and economic development, the defence of human rights, strengthening peace and stability and consolidating the bases of cultural openness among nations and peoples.

We will thus have taken the first essential steps towards the establishment of the new international order that we thought we had achieved at the end the cold war and the age of international polarization, which lasted 50 years after the end of the Second World War. The new international order to which we aspired did not materialize. Unfortunately, and in spite of the many initiatives and indications that had once seemed encouraging, the world instead soon fell into a new spiral of disagreements, disputes and regional, bilateral and internal conflicts. These seemed to be the direct results of the political vacuum left in the wake of the cold war. At the same time, new conflicts and disputes have joined the series of historically chronic crises that have plagued our world for decades and for which no effective solutions have been found.

We may discuss the future and a new world in which we seek to achieve the aspirations of all peoples to prosperity, progress and stability, but the priority of spending on arms and military purposes still prevails over all others, especially in the developing and poor regions of the world, where the need for resources for social and economic growth and development is paramount. In the meantime, economic conditions in these regions continue to deteriorate, social crises are exacerbated and living standards are plummeting ever faster.

Naturally, these are not the only problems. In the midst of such a vicious circle, the political crises facing these societies are intensified in turn and soon evolve into significant threats, not only to their security and internal fabric, but also to their neighbours. Particularly disturbing is the fact that this phenomenon has spread and expanded into several regions of the world. In this regard, and on behalf of my country, Qatar, I cannot but express satisfaction at the results of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation in the Balkans.

In the same context, my Government has followed with concern the events that have unfolded in East Timor in recent weeks. Qatar hopes for the success of the international efforts currently under way to restore peace and security. At the same time, we stress the hope that the Republic of Indonesia will transcend this difficult ordeal and reclaim its prominent position in South-East Asia and in the ranks of the international community as a whole.

While some recent developments have provided relatively reassuring indications of the possibility of settling regional and internal conflicts, given the resolve and the international will to do so, we find it necessary to recall here that we would have preferred that such international endeavours had taken place in a pre-emptive context that would have prevented the crises and the ensuing tragedies and suffering, instead of subsequent efforts aimed at salvaging whatever remained to be salvaged.

We express this concern and call for further international efforts to settle crises and to put an end to wars and conflicts because we in the State of Qatar profoundly believe in the right of peoples to live in freedom and peace. We also believe in the need to establish international relations on the basis of friendship, cooperation, mutual respect, common interests and good-neighbourliness. Proceeding from this, my country stands firmly and unambiguously in support of the settlement of differences and disputes in the Gulf region by peaceful means and through dialogue, negotiations, or international arbitration in order to consolidate security and stability in the region.

We also wish to place on record my Government's satisfaction at some of the positive developments and encouraging signs that we have noticed during the past months regarding the settlement of a number of questions that have long been a source of concern in our region. We welcome the progress made in settling the Lockerbie

matter and congratulate our Libyan brothers on that, hoping that this file will be closed and this matter concluded as soon as possible and in a way that will ensure the rights and interests of all parties.

Notwithstanding the positive indications and trends, which we welcome and hope will be strengthened, the general regional situation is still, to our great regret, far removed from the comprehensive peace, the lasting stability and the modes of cooperation, development and progress that we seek and desire for our region. The Iraqi crisis and its continuous repercussions on security and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East, and the cruel suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people, are all elements that cause great concern and prompt us to do our utmost in order to put an end to this crisis. We believe it is high time that we overcame the Iraqi crisis and found effective solutions to it so that the sanctions imposed against Iraq can be lifted and the cruel suffering of its peoples can be terminated. We have always resorted to diplomatic solutions, in accordance with international resolutions, in order to ensure the preservation of the territorial integrity and national unity of Iraq and to spare it and the entire region further dangers and agony.

There naturally remains the essential question, which in our view has been the main source of tension and crises in our region for more than half a century, and that is the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. I must say that we in the State of Qatar, together with our Arab brothers, have committed ourselves to peace as a permanent strategic option, a commitment which still stands. However, the peace process has regrettably failed to attain its envisaged results. Rather, this process has suffered setbacks over the past years, the responsibility for which, in our view, lies with the former Israeli Government, which opted to retreat from its commitments and pursued policies that prevented any progress in the peace process and in negotiations on its various tracks.

We welcome the changes that have taken place in the Israeli Government as a result of the recent general elections and in light of the formation of the new Government under the leadership of Mr. Ehud Barak and his stated intention to pursue peace more earnestly. However, we feel that such gestures must be coupled with concrete steps that would demonstrate good faith on the Israeli side and sincere readiness to meet its obligations by implementing the agreements concluded on all tracks during the previous stages of the negotiations, and to seek a resumption of the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as soon as possible, on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace.

Perhaps it suffices here to recall the recent affirmation by His Highness, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, in explaining my country's firm position on this matter. In our view, there can be no solution to this conflict nor peace in the Middle East except through a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement, based on the established principles that form the foundations of the peace process. This means the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the border of 4 June 1967 and from southern Lebanon and its western Bekaa valley, to the internationally recognized borders, and the regaining by the Palestinian people of their legitimate national and political rights, foremost among which is their natural right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital: the city of peace, the land of tolerance and the cradle of divine revelations, where religions have always coexisted in harmony and concord.

We must express concern over the continued presence of weapons of mass destruction in the region, especially nuclear weapons that are available exclusively to one side, the Israeli side. In our view, this constitutes a strategic imbalance and a threat to peace and security. Therefore, we believe in the need for the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction from our region, as an integral and complementary part of the peace process. We also call on Israel to accede to the international treaties providing for the limitation and non-proliferation of such weapons.

Peace, in our view, cannot be one-sided, nor can its benefits accrue exclusively on one side. Therefore, we sincerely look forward to the day when a balanced, just, comprehensive and genuine peace reigns in our region. Then we can speak of such advantages and benefits of peace as security, cooperation, stability, prosperity and progress for all the States and peoples in our region without exception.

We look forward to that day because we truly yearn to see a new Middle East, which enters the new millennium in a climate of peace, security and democracy; a climate in which we all respect pluralism of opinions, diversity of approaches and the right of peoples and States to self-determination, to better living

standards and to living in freedom, prosperity and dignity, in conformity with their lofty beliefs and values. This is one of the basic human rights we cherish. Our belief stems foremost from our profound belief in God Almighty and in His divine revelations with which He blessed all mankind.

This process of working for a better future and for our peoples imbues us with the utmost hope that we will be able to achieve the objective of building a new world worthy of our young generations which will inhabit it in the third millennium. As we are about to draw the curtain on an old century and welcome the dawn of a new one, we must pledge to our children that we will do our utmost so that their world will be a better world, more capable and better equipped to respond to their ambitions and aspirations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I call on the Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency the Honourable Rajkeswur Purryag.

Mr. Purryag (Mauritius): It is a distinct pleasure to address the Assembly with a distinguished son of Africa and a veteran freedom fighter in the presidency. His election to preside over this last session of the closing millennium is a fitting tribute to his outstanding qualities. I congratulate him warmly and assure him of the total support and cooperation of my delegation.

We also thank His Excellency Mr. Opertti for the excellent manner in which he presided over the work of the fifty-third session. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose strong commitment to the cause of the United Nations needs hardly be emphasized, has continued to lead the Organization with vision, vigour and great dedication.

Mauritius welcomes very warmly the admission of the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Kiribati and the Republic of Nauru to the United Nations.

The curtain will soon fall on our eventful twentieth century, a century of tremendous achievements by mankind. The wide world has been reduced to a global village through progress in the field of science and technology during this century. The political map of the world has undergone tremendous transformation. It is hardly recognizable from what it used to be at this century's outset. Today, our world is made of independent nations, with peoples themselves in charge of their destinies. On the other hand, we did experience the horrors of wars in the first half of the century but decided never to let it happen again. We created the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War as a forum for all nations to carry forward together a common pledge for lasting world peace and promote development and progress for all humanity.

During this century man has paradoxically also created weapons of mass destruction that threaten his very existence. Disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, remains a major preoccupation for all of us as we step into the new millennium. The United Nations, representing the collective conscience of nations, has endeavoured to serve humanity and the cause of peace and development. The United Nations is the sole mechanism through which universal peace can be secured. We unanimously agree also that reforms to the Charter of the United Nations are necessary — indeed, overdue — as in its present form it does not reflect the tremendous changes the world has undergone since the Organization was founded half a century ago.

It is now almost six years since the General Assembly established the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. Progress has been slow and has taken place on a limited set of issues only.

What is lacking for the process to move forward is political will on the part of some members. The fact is that the Security Council in its present form is neither adequately representative nor sufficiently transparent in its work for its decisions to be universally accepted.

Mauritius supports the proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the reform of the Security Council. We appeal to all Members of the United Nations to work together constructively and advance the much needed reform process expeditiously.

While the international community has largely been successful in averting global wars, armed conflicts have continued to endanger national, regional and international peace. In particular, the African continent has continued to be afflicted with conflicts, the worst being the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the continued civil war in Angola.

However, the international community should take comfort in the fact that the leaders on the African continent have spared no efforts to find solutions and restore peace in the countries and areas in question. Through tireless and extensive efforts of African leaders, the OAU and the United Nations, and all the parties concerned in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have signed the Lusaka Agreement in order to restore peace and stability in the country. One of the fundamental aspects of the Agreement is the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force, with the task of ensuring that all parties respect the terms of the Lusaka Agreement. We deplore the fact that the United Nations peacekeeping force has still not assumed its crucial responsibility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call upon the Security Council to give due priority to this matter so that a peacekeeping force is dispatched expeditiously, as delay to do so may imperil the implementation of the Agreement.

The rebellion in Angola continues because of arms supplies from outside to the forces of destabilization. The Security Council is fully apprised of this and confident that those guilty of breaking the embargo on arms supply to UNITA will be identified and held responsible. The people of Angola have indeed suffered too long. We therefore appeal to all nations to take necessary steps to ensure that unscrupulous elements do not channel weapons to the forces of rebellion in Angola out of their greed of monetary windfalls. The international community needs to intensify its efforts to end the rebellion in Angola.

The armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea ended with the signing recently of an agreement with the help of the OAU and several African leaders and friendly countries. We hope that the spirit in which the two countries have agreed to end their differences will continue and that lasting peace will return to the region. We are also heartened by the fact that an agreement has been signed between the parties concerned to end the internal strife in Sierra Leone. We are confident that peace and stability will now return to Sierra Leone.

In the Comoros, forces of destabilization have continued to thwart the return to normalcy. Through tireless efforts by the OAU and countries of the region, a conference of all the Comoros parties concerned was held earlier this year in Madagascar with a view to reaching an agreement under which peace and stability would return to the Comoros and territorial integrity and sovereignty would be maintained. Unfortunately, the military coup derailed the whole process. We therefore call for the establishment of democratic rule in the Comoros so that the agreement reached at the Antananarivo conference can be fully implemented.

The Kosovo conflict has distressed us all. We have witnessed the horrors of ethnic cleansing, massive disruption of the life of a people and terrible destruction inflicted on a country. We must all remember many messages from the events in Kosovo. Humanity will not sit idly by when people are flagrantly subjected to genocide for reason of ethnic bigotry or political expediency. Quick-fix military action to resolve deep-rooted problems is not necessarily the best option. The United Nations remains the most appropriate mechanism for addressing issues that relate to maintenance of international peace and security.

Mauritius is deeply distressed by the violence in East Timor, the loss of so many innocent lives and the terrible sufferings inflicted on the Timorese people in the aftermath of the recent referendum. We welcome the action undertaken by the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to restore peace and security on the island. The verdict of the referendum must be respected by the Indonesian Government and all parties concerned.

In the Middle East, the determination shown by the new Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Ehud Barak, to move the peace process forward, together with President Arafat, is most encouraging not only to the parties concerned in the region but also to the international community as a whole. This moment of great optimism must be seized in order to work out a comprehensive and just settlement that will bring lasting peace and stability to the region.

In 1996 our delegation, led by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, drew special attention to the situation in Fiji. We are pleased that the new constitutional process under which general elections were recently held has removed the iniquities which were written into that nation's Constitution before. We welcome this change and congratulate the people of Fiji on their courage and determination to bring the change in a democratic and peaceful manner.

(spoke in French)

Conflicts and wars, even after they have ended, invariably leave serious humanitarian situations behind them. The humanitarian crises in Africa seem of little interest to the cameras of international television

networks. There are more than 12 million people who need urgent humanitarian assistance in Africa. The humanitarian agencies have received only $352 million although their needs for Africa in 1999 are in the order of $796 million.

Peacemaking efforts must be supported by effective humanitarian aid, especially for refugees. The host countries, already faced with their own difficulties, cannot take on this heavy burden. To give lasting peace a real chance, it is also necessary to support the return of refugees so as to make the stabilization of society possible. A special financing effort on the part of the international community is necessary to that end.

(spoke in English)

Respect for human rights is of primordial importance for the prevention of conflicts and for the maintenance of durable peace. We believe that all countries should make strict adherence to the human rights instruments of the United Nations a matter of national priority. We in Mauritius always place human rights high on our national and international agenda. Mauritius was honoured to host the First OAU ministerial conference on human rights, held earlier this year in the context of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The conference reviewed the human rights situation in Africa and adopted a declaration and plan of action which aim at strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights.

We have witnessed gross violations of human rights, particularly under military regimes. In this regard, the decision at the recent OAU summit in Algiers to exclude from that organization those leaders who assume power in the continent through military coups is an important step that will help the cause of democracy and human rights.

Mr. Essy (Cote d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mauritius has welcomed the International Criminal Court and was amongst the first to ratify the Statute establishing it. We look forward to an early conclusion of the work of our experts who are currently engaged in finalizing the rules to enable the International Criminal Court to commence its work.

The easy availability of light and small-calibre weapons has given rise to numerous conflicts, particularly in Africa. These small arms, besides exacerbating conflicts, give rise to social disruption, insecurity, instability, violence and crime. In view of the magnitude of the problem, the OAU summit in Algiers last July decided to convene a regional conference to address the issue fully. We urge the international community to take measures to control the flow of small arms.

Disarmament is essential for international peace. It is regrettable that the threat of nuclear holocaust will accompany humanity into the new millennium because of the international community's failure to work out a regime for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty we have taken important steps on the issue of nuclear disarmament, but these alone cannot eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons. Mauritius continues to be firmly of the belief that the best way for the international community to address the nuclear disarmament issue effectively is to establish a clear timetable for nuclear-weapon Powers to commit themselves to dismantle all nuclear weapons and for all nations to commit themselves to not develop such weapons in the future. So far we have adopted half-way measures only; it is time for a bold step to be taken that would eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all.

Chemical weapons, as weapons of mass destruction, can inflict untold miseries on their victims. The Convention on Chemical Weapons — a very significant achievement — must be adhered to by all nations, particularly countries that have chemical weapons in their possession.

The lives of many people around the world, in Africa in particular, continue to be affected by landmines. We believe it is the responsibility of all nations to address this problem collectively. We appeal to those countries that have not yet acceded to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines to do so and also to contribute financially to the efforts to remove all landmines.

Peace, security and development are indivisible and mutually reinforcing. As we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century we have a historic opportunity to create a long-term visionary strategy for the sustainable development of all countries of the world, in particular African States, and thus promote international peace and security. This is extremely important if we really want to avoid the marginalization in the wake of the irreversible process of globalization and unbridled liberalization. It is increasingly being realized that market forces alone

cannot resolve the problems of poverty, deprivation and marginalization, particularly in Africa, which comprises the largest number of least-developed countries. The United Nations system, in our view, has an important role to play in this respect as there is a crying need for coherence in the formulation and implementation of policies in the trade, finance and social sectors.

It is true that globalization brings both challenges and opportunities, but to many developing countries the challenges are proving overwhelming. But there does not seem to be any alternative, in a world characterized by the *"pensee unique"*, to making the necessary adjustments to join a fast globalizing world economy. Higher levels of investment; technology transfer; and institutional, human resource and infrastructure capacity-building, will be required especially for African countries, if they are to make the necessary transition.

The developed world and the major financial and trading organizations must be not only cognizant of the situation but also responsive to the constraints on and needs of the developing world in general and the least-developed countries and vulnerable small island developing States in particular.

The heavy debt burden, the declining level of official development assistance — which currently stands at 0.22 per cent of gross domestic product compared to the target of 0.7 per cent — and insignificant private investment flows into Africa do not allow many African countries to implement successfully the necessary adjustment programmes to compete effectively in the world market. Only decisive action to resolve the debt problem can provide the necessary impetus.

Although we recognize that the Cologne Summit initiative represents an improvement over the original Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, we believe that the unsustainable debt of Africa — which contains 33 of the 41 HIPC countries — should be written off, for only then can those countries embark on the path of sustainable growth and development.

In that connection, we welcome the recently announced plan to cancel $27 billion of debt owed by the poorest countries to allow them to use those resources to finance education and health, which are important in dealing with the problem of poverty.

We also commend the World Bank for establishing the $400 million Infrastructure Investment Fund, whose advisory board will be headed by Mr. Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa.

Capacity-building in all sectors of the economy is important if developing countries are to benefit from the opportunities arising from globalization and trade liberalization. But in view of the lack of a level playing field and the inherent obstacles facing African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, it is imperative for them to continue to benefit from trade preferences in the European Union under the successor to the fourth ACP-CEE Convention of Lomé for a sufficiently long transitional period before they implement any alternative trade arrangement.

The euphoria created following the signing of the Marrakesh agreement in 1994 after the conclusion of the Uruguay Round has been short-lived; many developing countries today recognize that they are overburdened with World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments and obligations. There is indeed a growing recognition that implementation of these commitments is simply beyond their capacity, or rather that there is a limit to trade liberalization and deregulation.

It is, therefore, important to allow developing countries flexibility within the world trading system to implement policies in harmony with their sustainable development needs. The provisions on special and differential treatment in all areas covered by WTO agreements should be fully and effectively implemented. In this regard, it is also crucial that the multilateral trading system should facilitate the process of regional integration, because for many countries regional integration is an important step towards their integration into the global economy.

We welcome and support the recent OAU decision to accelerate implementation of the 1991 Abuja Treaty for the establishment of an African Economic Community. This process could be facilitated by effective implementation of the United States of America-Africa Blueprint adopted in March 1999 and more importantly, of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. We urge the United States to ensure early passage of this long-standing Bill with its original provisions on textiles and clothing.

Two days ago, I had the opportunity in my address to the recent Assembly special session to highlight both the inherent constraints on small island developing countries and their development needs. The special

session gave us an opportunity to review the implementation of the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS): we must take the process further to embrace other issues, such as concessional loans and trade preferences for SIDS.

I reiterate my appeal to the international community to give special attention to the plight of SIDS, in terms both of providing financial resources, and of encouraging foreign direct investment, and also in the context of the negotiations for the third WTO Ministerial Conference, in Seattle. We must ensure that the Conference, which is to be held later this year, addresses the marginalization of small economies and the problems of developing countries that are net importers of food by adopting specific and practical measures. We must also see to it that the Seattle Round of multilateral trade negotiations is a "development round" that puts the issue of development firmly on the international agenda. The WTO negotiations in Seattle should be broad-based and should provide a balanced outcome from which all countries will benefit.

In this connection, it should be emphasized that agricultural trade is of vital importance to a number of developing countries, in particular to small economies including small and vulnerable island developing States. In the agricultural trade negotiations we should give just as much importance to non-trade issues such as food security, environmental protection and the viability of rural populations.

These are vital issues for Mauritius, and for many other SIDS and small economics and small economies. And that is why we are emphasizing the multifunctionality of agriculture. Planting sugar cane, which is the only crop suitable to our difficult terrains, and which is resistant to adverse climatic conditions like cyclones and droughts, also contributes to environmental protection by providing a renewable source of energy. Sugar exports earnings assure food security. Many small island developing countries are in the same situation as Mauritius. We would therefore urge that this important dimension be fully taken into account in the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

Economic growth by itself does not bring about sustainable socio-economic development. Social development should continue to be given due consideration by our Organization. We therefore welcome the follow-up conferences on social development and on women, which will be organized next year.

For the majority of small States, the United Nations continues to be the main bulwark against infringements on their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We have consistently drawn the attention of the Assembly to the issue of the Chagos Archipelago, which was detached from Mauritius by the former colonial Power prior to our independence in 1968, and also to the plight of over 2000 people who were forced to leave the land of their birth, where they had lived for generations, for resettlement in Mauritius. This was done in total disregard of the United Nations declaration embodied in resolution 1514 (XV), of 14 December 1960, and resolution 2066 (XX), of 16 December 1965, which prohibit the dismemberment of colonial Territories prior to independence.

Mauritius has repeatedly asked for the return of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, on which a United States military base has been built, and thereby the restoration of its territorial integrity. The over 2,000 displaced Ilois people have been facing tremendous difficulties in adapting in mainland Mauritius, in spite of all the efforts that Mauritius has made to assist them in this process.

So far the issue has been discussed within the framework of our friendly relations with the United Kingdom, with a view to arriving at an acceptable solution. Unfortunately, there has not been significant progress. The United Kingdom has been maintaining that the Chagos Archipelago will be returned to Mauritius only when it is no longer required for defence purposes by the West. While we continue the dialogue for an early resolution of the issue on a bilateral basis, we urge the United Kingdom in the meantime to allow the displaced inhabitants to return to the Chagos Archipelago. At the dawn of the new millennium, when we so strongly uphold universal recognition of and respect for fundamental human rights, the inhabitants of Chagos should not continue to be denied the right to return to the Chagos Archipelago.

The restoration of the territorial integrity of the State of Mauritius will not be complete without the return of Tromelin. We therefore call upon France to resume constructive discussions with us on the question of Tromelin.

This is the last session of the General Assembly for this century. When we meet next year it will be a new millennium. The question that comes to our minds is whether we want to come back next year and discuss the same issues and the same problems. Should we not,

rather, make a pledge here and now that by the time we meet next year we will have taken the necessary measures that will put an end to regional and ethnic problems and to the abuse of human rights, and will instead create the necessary environment to enable the human race to enjoy basic freedom and basic rights in peace and prosperity? Mauritius is ready to make such a pledge.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada.

Mr. Adada (Congo) *(spoke in French)*: I wish to join the many previous speakers who have congratulated the President. I congratulate him most warmly on behalf of the Congolese delegation on his election to preside over the fifty-fourth session, which is a tribute to him personally and to his country, a symbol of the struggle for decolonization in Africa. The Congo, an old friend of Namibia, welcomes his election. I am convinced that thanks to his human qualities and his wealth of experience forged in the liberation struggle and at the head of his country's diplomacy, the work of this session will be carried out harmoniously and successfully. I assure him of the support of my delegation in the discharge of his heavy responsibilities.

To his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, we express our profound gratitude for the ability and skill with which he conducted the work of the last session.

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, we pay a well-deserved tribute for his profound commitment to the service of peace and development.

Lastly, I would like to welcome warmly the new Member States of Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga, whose admission can only strengthen the universal nature of the United Nations.

Has not the time come to take stock of our common labour? Will the great family of the United Nations enter the third millennium convinced that it has contributed to promoting the noble ideals contained in the Charter of our universal Organization? Have international peace and security, the development of nations and the rights of citizens been treated in a way that allows us to enter the next century calmly and with hope?

In Africa there are still far too many causes for concern. Far too many challenges leave us doubtful, despite some positive events in the continent, in particular the political changes in South Africa and Nigeria.

In Angola, the many statements and decisions of the international community remain unimplemented because of Jonas Savimbi's stubborn adherence to the logic of war. The war in Angola, which has rendered fruitless the efforts of an entire generation of diplomats, has revealed the limits of our Organization in the restoration of peace. This is the occasion to reaffirm that the solid basis for a definitive resolution of the conflict remains the effective implementation of comprehensive mandatory sanctions. They alone will lead to the complete isolation of Mr. Jonas Savimbi and UNITA, so long as the international community truly complies.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we welcome the conclusion of the Lusaka Agreement, which opens the way to resolving the political and military crisis in that fraternal country. My country is counting on the commitment of the various protagonists for the Agreement's implementation. We strongly hope that the observer mission planned by the United Nations will be effective and that it will create favourable conditions for the holding of a Great Lakes regional conference, which the international community is calling for wholeheartedly.

The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is another major concern in Africa. We invite those two fraternal peoples to rise above the situation by fully supporting the peace plan of the Organization of African Unity to put an end to that war.

Lastly, we cannot fail to pay tribute to the courage displayed by the authorities of Sierra Leone, who have agreed to pay a very high price for the restoration of peace in that country.

In this world, in which the universality of principles is often limited by force, great men can be guided only by the interests of their peoples. A year ago, from this very rostrum, I proclaimed our faith in the future of our country following the civil war that started on 5 June 1997. I said then that for the Congolese Government the future was national reconciliation, the restoration of peace, the reconstruction of the country and the resumption of the democratic process. We have explained this great project wherever and whenever we could — at the United Nations, at the Organization of African Unity and in all our contacts with all of our partners —

and we have found understanding and attention everywhere.

In the context of the resumption of the democratic process, we have carried out an administrative census of the population in order to identify the electorate, we have elaborated a draft Constitution; and we have established our higher courts — the Supreme Court and the High Court of Justice.

Regrettably, this impetus has been hampered by a resumption of violence, orchestrated once again by those who on several occasions plunged our people into mourning — first in 1993-1994 and then in 1997 — and whose only aim is the partition of Congo into ethnic ghettos.

The consequences have been catastrophic for the entire country. These have included heinous crimes such as the assassination of officials and leaders of local communities, the kidnapping of tens of thousands of people to serve as human shields for the armed groups, and the systematic destruction of infrastructures vital to the economy of the country.

But those plans to overthrow institutions have failed. Today the pacification efforts made by the Government have borne fruit. The fighting has ended. Several former militia members of the failed regime have laid down their weapons and have given themselves up to the authorities. We are also seeing a mass influx of civilians back into Brazzaville and to the main towns in the interior.

The guests who did us the honour of participating in the Pan-African Music Festival that the city of Brazzaville hosted from 1 to 8 August 1999 witnessed the determination of the Government and the entire people to rebuild this country as a haven of peace. That event — a time of great joy and reunion for the Congolese people — strengthened our conviction that the worst was behind us and that henceforth we could look to the future with calmness and optimism.

All of these steps forward on the path of peace are to the credit of one man, President Denis Sassou Nguesso. His faith in reconciliation and national unity was again made clear on 14 August 1999 on the occasion of the national holiday, when, on behalf of the fraternal republic, he solemnly reaffirmed his desire for dialogue and decided to grant amnesty to all combatants guilty of war crimes who agreed to renounce violence and definitively to lay down their weapons.

In this same context of a return to a stable situation under full control throughout the national territory, the Government reiterates its firm and unswerving will to resume the inter-Congolese political dialogue with a view to pacification and reunion in order to consolidate the newfound peace and security, strengthen national unity and the reconciliation of all the sons and daughters of the Congo, rebuild the country on a lasting basis, and resume the democratic process, which had been interrupted by violence.

The offer made was favourably received, leading in particular to the return to Brazzaville of many political leaders who had gone into exile following the war of 5 June 1997. We are confident in the positive outcome of this process.

In the wake of such a tragic period, naturally we are striving to cope with emergency situations. These include the shelter, management and social reintegration of tens of thousands of displaced persons, a humanitarian tragedy whose scale has not always been clearly perceived by the international community; the protection of people and property; the respect of human rights; and the restoration of normal living conditions in many war-torn communities — an overwhelming task that anyone would agree requires means exceeding by far the capacities of a State bled dry such as Congo is today.

We are assuming all of our responsibilities, and here we call on the international community, which should accompany our efforts with greater commitment and contribute, as it wishes to do, to the restoration on a lasting basis of peace, security and democracy and to the reconstruction of Congo.

At a time when our people are suffering from poverty and destitution and from the economic crisis, there is no place for conflicts that are both fratricidal and suicidal.

In the context of the quest for sustainable and lasting peace and development in Africa, specific and practical measures must be resolutely taken along the lines of the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General of our Organization. Among those conclusions, which we unanimously supported, I would like to mention those relating to the proliferation of, and illicit traffic in, small arms, which is an important factor in the increase in terrorism and crime in our States.

That is why, at the thirty-fifth Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held last July in Algiers, the African Heads of State and Government devoted most of their consideration to ways and means of consolidating peace in order to create modern States based on the primacy of law, respect of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, and the democratic governance of public affairs.

Along the same lines, on 20 September last, at the opening of the general debate, the current Chairman of the OAU, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, clearly set out in this very Hall Africa's views on the key questions of peace, security, economic development and international cooperation. The Congo associates itself fully with that important declaration.

I cannot conclude this political analysis without mentioning other areas of tension that are a source of concern for us at this session. Thus we express the hope that the impetus provided by the Wye River accords and the Sharm el-Sheik Memorandum on the Middle East will be consolidated. The Government of the Congo is also closely following the evolution of the situation in East Timor and welcomes the efforts of the international community, which led to the dispatch of an international force to restore peace in that territory and to ensure the respect of the political will clearly expressed by that people during the referendum organized by the United Nations.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, building peace and security in the world requires real commitment on our part to work for economic and social development. In this context, our planet can never be certain of lasting peace so long as there is destitution and poverty, which not only affect the quality of human life but are also a cause of political instability.

But how can we achieve lasting sustainable development when the world economy is opening up no encouraging prospects for developing countries, when debt receives discriminatory treatment in initiatives whose conditions for implementation show how illusory they are, when resources allocated to official development assistance are constantly declining, and lastly, when there is a clear refusal to grant developing countries opportunities to integrate their economies into the new trade system.

In any case, because of what is at stake, globalization will be the main challenge of the next century. Today it is giving rise to fears because of the threat it implies to the sovereignty of our States and to our cultural and historical characteristics, and because it raises grave questions about our countries' prospects for development. Its implementation calls more than ever for the creation of appropriate, agreed-upon mechanisms so as to translate into reality hopes for humankind's unified development and for prosperity shared among peoples.

It was in this context that recently, at Algiers and at Sirte, that the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the Organization of African Unity resolutely committed themselves to working for the strengthening of subregional economic groups, in accordance with the spirit of the Abuja Treaty.

The coming century will bring with it challenges for our Organization. Overcoming them will require harmonized approaches taken in a representative context. Thus my country attaches particular importance to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations and to the restructuring of its main bodies, so as to combat the uncertainties born of an unequal world and to take firm steps to make multilateralism truly democratic. The United Nations remains an irreplaceable tool. However, it deserves to be rethought and revitalized so that it will be equal to the challenges confronting us.

To succeed, we will need to join together the will, the efforts and the means of the whole of the international community. Congo reaffirms its commitment to make its full contribution to the achievement of that goal.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Gurirab on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I am confident that the struggle for freedom of his friendly country, Namibia, and his wide-ranging knowledge of international issues will facilitate his lofty task and will lead the deliberations of the Assembly at this important session to a successful conclusion.

I should like to express my thanks to the Foreign Minister of Uruguay for his efforts and wise leadership of our deliberations in the General Assembly during the previous session. I should also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of our Organization,

Mr. Kofi Annan, for his attempts to uphold the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations. We are confident that the presence of these States in the international community will buttress the role of the United Nations and uphold its principles.

Leaving the last century of the second millennium and entering the first century of the third millennium does not in itself mean the end of an era and the beginning of a new one in the life of humankind. States and peoples will take with them into the next century their concerns, aspirations, successes, failures, challenges and hopes. They will continue as usual to follow their economic, educational, political and social development plans and programmes, knowing that the end of the twentieth century will not automatically mean an end to current regional conflicts. Neither will it automatically raise levels of development or rid developing countries of the debt burdens under which they are languishing.

If the advocates of market theories and globalization, and their political leaders, were to recognize that at present the poor are becoming poorer while the rich become richer and that the gap between developing and developed countries is becoming wider in every area — whether in the economic, commercial, technical, health or environmental spheres — an element of pessimism would, unfortunately, mar the feeling of optimism with which we hope to welcome the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Optimism about the future is desirable because it prevents humanity, both at individual and society levels, from falling into the trap of despair and frustration. Optimism is also justified because progress in research, science and knowledge shrinks distances, eliminates obstacles and opens doors and minds in the South as well as in the North. Given that fact, it is natural that people's understanding of each other's problems and concerns should increase and that ultimately a common awareness will develop to enable everyone to face the threats and challenges that await humankind everywhere on this planet.

Mr. Jayanama (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Like poisonous waste from industrial development, the epidemics resulting from underdevelopment and poverty know no borders or obstacles. Drugs would not have spread in some States in the South had it not been for the many traffickers and users in the countries of the North. Neither should we forget that the pollution of the environment in the countries of the North is primarily the result of industrial production of all kinds, both sophisticated and basic, at a time when environmental pollution in the countries of the South is primarily the result of the lack of a minimum of small, basic industries capable of making products to deal with environmental pollution or of employing the means to do so.

In this context, we should like to reaffirm our belief that weakening the economies of the developing countries does not necessarily serve the interests of the economies of developed countries, because it weakens the purchasing power of the former, which, in turn, negatively affects the rates of economic development of the latter. The financial crisis that affected the economies of the countries of South-East Asia two years ago reflected that mutual effect when its repercussions reached Brazil and even some other countries in South America. There must, therefore, be a constructive dialogue between developing and developed countries, a dialogue based on common interests, genuine interrelations and mutual responsibilities aimed at ensuring sustainable development and social justice.

We hope that there will be an end to the contrariety by which the industrial countries demand that developing countries open their markets and borders to their products while the developing countries are finding it difficult to export their goods because of protectionist measures and obstacles, including the prevention of the transfer of technology and the refusal to allow developing countries to integrate such technology into their industrial processes.

If we were to look back at the ethnic and religious wars and conflicts that spread with the end of the cold war and that reached the heart of Africa, Asia and even Europe, we would find it difficult to imagine their repercussions being confined within closed borders. Through succeeding waves of migration, various religions and ethnic groups have become part of the social fabric of most societies in the world, especially in Western countries. The tragedy of such wars and conflicts is therefore a source of concern for most countries of the world, particularly the United States of America, which has the largest number of ethnic and religious groups of any country in recent history. That fact explains the interest the United States takes in regional conflicts, particularly those in the Middle East, which have repercussions at the domestic level in the United States.

Such American interest is commensurate with the varied impact of these conflicts, although one should not disregard the other economic and strategic interests.

The impact of impressive scientific and technological advances in communications and in the flow of information on such events will not be limited to a momentary pinprick of conscience when we see them on our television screens. It could well go beyond this in the future, resulting in concrete action by large groups and could in turn threaten the stability and sovereignty of States, especially those whose populations encompass many ethnic groups and religions.

It is regrettable that these grave challenges and phenomena will be carried over into the next century, perhaps for years or even decades, without a remedy. We are convinced that the best framework for facing up to these challenges and phenomena in a serious and effective manner is a United Nations truly respected by all its Member States, one based on collective action by the States of the North and of the South, all according to their own potential and capacities.

Marginalizing the role of the United Nations, using it only on selected occasions and as a cover for initiatives and decisions adopted outside the Security Council, will serve the interests of no one. The problems and challenges facing mankind are truly grave and dangerous both quantitatively and qualitatively. We believe that no one State, however powerful and wise it is, can meet these universal problems and challenges alone, much less find lasting, solid solutions to them.

Clearly, many are dissatisfied with the use of humanitarian pretexts to launch military intervention outside the framework of the Security Council. It began with the intervention in Somalia in 1992, whose repercussions included the collapse of all State institutions and the carving up of the capital, Mogadishu, among fighting warlords. This trend continued with the intervention in Kosovo, where the fate of the people remains in the balance, although the intervention succeeded in supplying the people with medicine and food.

But here it must be said that illegitimate intervention outside the framework of the Security Council is not as bad as completely ignoring dangerous and bloody crises such as those beyond what might be called the line of death and hunger: a line stretching from the Horn of Africa, in the east, to Angola, in the west, and then to Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo. Many suffering Africans who live along this bleeding line and who lack the most basic necessities may well envy the inhabitants of Kosovo, who at least had food and medicine during their ordeal.

Since the end of the cold war hopes have been pinned on the reform of the United Nations and on an increase in the membership of the Security Council with a view to achieving a more democratic and fairer representation in this international organization. The Non-Aligned Movement has been enthusiastic about this issue and has given it serious consideration at all its conferences. Its member States know full well that they lack influence in the Security Council commensurate with their numbers and reflecting their legitimate concerns. At the same time, Germany and Japan, following major international transformations, have become aware of how important it is for them to become permanent members of the Security Council. Here Italy has played an important role in seeking a third way between the North and the South. No solution has yet emerged that could attract consensus on the subject among members of the United Nations.

The unavoidable question for us all is what has so far been achieved in the process of reforming the Security Council and promoting its role and status. The answer is nothing, except for the marginalization of the role and status of the Security Council and the extension of its activities beyond the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, both when events have required it and, at times, when they have not. It seems that the premeditated marginalization of the role of the Security Council and the fact that the reform process has been almost dormant are being used by some as a pretext for ignoring the Charter and violating the sovereignty of States through the use of regional military organizations as a substitute for the Security Council.

The world today cannot endure a nuclear arms race that threatens the security and the very survival of mankind, particularly in the absence of a just and stable international order. There will be no successful non-proliferation regime without achieving universality for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Syria, the other Arab States and most countries of the world have appealed to the five nuclear States, in the light of the 1995 extension of the NPT, not to exclude any State from acceding to the Treaty, so that the world may be spared another nuclear arms race. A new nuclear arms race has actually taken place in South Asia since the extension of the Treaty. In the Middle East, Israel remains the only State in the region that refuses to

accede to the Treaty and to submit all its nuclear installations to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As the time for the next review of the NPT approaches, Syria renews its call for transforming the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone under United Nations auspices, as a serious contribution to the creation of a propitious climate for the regional peace, security and stability to which we all aspire.

The international community looked to the peace process that began at Madrid in 1991 as the most important, most serious initiative for ending a conflict that has been raging for decades, one that has bled the huge economic and human energies of the peoples of the region. The Madrid framework, the guarantees offered by the United States, the results reached based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, all constituted obligations and commitments accepted by all parties concerned. None of these can now be called into question or circumvented. They all have been duly deposited with the United States Administration, with the agreement of the parties concerned. Hence Syria's call to reaffirm that trust, including complete Israeli withdrawal to the lines of 4 June 1967, and resumption of peace talks with Israel from the point at which they were suspended in order to address pending matters until both sides agree on full peace.

What Syria is calling for cannot be considered a "precondition", as the Israeli government claims: if we were to accept that it was, as the Netanyahu Government also claimed, we would have to conclude that any agreement between negotiators on any single component of any a peace accord would always be considered a "precondition" if any move were made to conclude any other component of a peace accord. And that would invariably take negotiations, back to square one after each step forward, endlessly back and forth.

Also, we draw the Assembly's attention to the falsity of the Israeli claim that Syria wants to get a particular result in the negotiations before they have even started. Needless to say, trust in the United States of America does not, by itself, constitute a peace agreement; rather, it is a fundamental part of an agreement whose remaining elements — normal, peaceful relations and security arrangements based on the purposes and principles laid down under United States auspices and with its participation — still need to be fleshed out.

So we were not surprised, yesterday, by the address of the Foreign Minister of Israel before this Assembly, when — under the flag of peace education — he requested leaders and teachers to stress to their peoples and students the importance of peace, totally ignoring the fact that the Israeli occupation is a major reason for the absence of peace in the region.

Peace education requires first and foremost an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories. Specifically, it must withdraw from the Golan Heights to the 4 June 1967 line; from south Lebanon; from the western Bekaa, and also from Jerusalem, the city of peace. Settlement activities in the occupied territories and the destruction of Arab houses must stop. Last but not least, Israeli words about peace must be translated into deeds, so that students in Israel do not think that peace education means continued occupation by force of other peoples' lands.

During the past few weeks, major efforts have been made by the United States of America, and by the European Union, the Russian Federation and other countries. We hope that these efforts will continue until Israel realizes how fair Syria's position is and how ready Syria is to resume negotiations at the point where they left off. Let us not waste long and arduous years of negotiations: Syria is eager not to miss this opportunity to achieve peace; if it is missed, then Israel alone should take the blame.

Syria reaffirms once more its great concern for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and calls for an end to the suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people. It calls for economic sanctions to be lifted, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. It also calls for no action or measure to be taken outside the United Nations context. At the same time, we ask Iraq to implement the remaining Security Council resolutions in a manner that guarantees a just solution to the problem of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other detainees.

Syria also calls on the Security Council to put an immediate and final end to the sanctions against Libya, as Libya has honoured all its obligations under Security Council resolutions. We would emphasize that we fully support the Libyan requests for the sanctions to be ended. In the light of the fraternal relations which Syria maintains with the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, we call on these two neighbouring countries to hold talks to find a peaceful solution to the dispute over three islands in the Gulf.

The continuing tragic situation in Afghanistan is a source of great concern to us. We are convinced that the Afghan problem can be solved only if the fighting ceases and negotiations are begun on achieving national reconciliation and finding an acceptable and lasting political settlement that results in security and stability for our friends the Afghan people.

Syria expresses its full support for all measures to ensure peace, security and stability on the Korean peninsula. It expresses its support also for the aspirations of the Korean people for national unity achieved by peaceful means and free of foreign intervention.

Syria once again highlights the need to take all necessary steps, at the earliest possible moment, to end the economic, trade and financial embargo on Cuba imposed by the United States of America for almost four decades. We support Cuba's call for differences between the two countries to be resolved through dialogue and on a basis of equality, mutual respect and good- neighbourly relations.

As we bid farewell to the twentieth century, the human race is still yearning for a world free of war, injustice, ignorance and poverty, a world governed by international relations based on cooperation, mutual respect, greater justice and true equity. Those are the yearnings which the peoples of the world hope to see realized next century so that coming generations are guaranteed a better life and a more prosperous and humane future.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Hong Soon-young.

Mr. Hong (Republic of Korea): On behalf of my delegation, I offer Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I also pay a tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, under whose leadership the Assembly succeeded in achieving positive results at its fifty-third session.

I have every expectation that this, the final session of the Assembly of the twentieth century, will be as fruitful. The rich experience and leadership Mr. Gurirab brings to the presidency ensure the session's success. I assure him of our full cooperation and support in his noble endeavours.

I warmly congratulate the three new Members, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, on their admission to the United Nations.

The new millennium is about to dawn, and we will enter it with great hope for the new age, but also burdened by numerous problems left unresolved from the passing century. To realize the hope and mould the twenty-first century into an era of global peace and stability, of well-being and prosperity for all humankind, we must face up to these problems, decide what our priority goals are and seek measures to achieve them. So that the fifty-fourth session may illuminate the way, let us gather the best of our collective wisdom.

The defining character of our times is change and the acceleration of change. The guiding precept of the global actors is shifting from nationalism to internationalism, and further to globalism. The whole world is converging around shared values and behaviour patterns. In economic affairs, the market economy is becoming the global norm. In political matters, reconciliation and cooperation have become the expected mode of behaviour. The world is becoming a global village of countries willing and eager to live with one another in interdependence and integration.

A conspicuous exception to the tide of the times is the Korean peninsula, where the confrontational structure of the cold-war era still keeps the two divided sides in mutual distrust and hostility. Decades have passed since the end of the Korean war, but genuine peace has yet to come to the Korean people. Despite the warm wind of reconciliation blowing around the world, the Korean peninsula has remained frozen in an icy time warp.

The Republic of Korea aspires to melt away the ice and reconcile with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It aspires to free the Korean peninsula from the final legacy of the cold war and allow it to take its rightful place in the grand march of history towards the new era. To realize this aspiration, the engagement policy of the Government of President Kim Dae-jung has been sending warm winds of sunshine to the North, in hopes that it will respond in kind. Inspired by the lessons of history and the trend of the times, this sunshine policy represents a bold shift in our thinking about South-North relations.

Our engagement policy is not aimed at undermining or absorbing the North. Instead, it is a policy of cooperation, designed to help North Korea overcome its economic difficulties and promote the co-prosperity of all

Koreans, so that we may finally be free from the threat of another war. It is a policy of tolerance, envisioning the peaceful coexistence of two systems along the road to eventual unification.

The steady and consistent implementation of the engagement policy during the past year and a half has made meaningful and unprecedented openings in the thick wall that divides South and North Korea. South Korean businesses are investing in the North. In one such venture, over 100,000 South Korean tourists were able to visit a scenic mountain in the North for the first time since the national division.

Economic cooperation is also an important element in the work of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, a joint endeavour of the Republic of Korea, the United States, Japan, the European Union and many other countries to help resolve North Korea's energy-shortage problem while keeping it free of nuclear weapons. The engagement policy is being carried out in close consultation with the United States and Japan. It also has the full support of our neighbours in North-East Asia — China, the Russian Federation and Mongolia — as well as the G-7, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the European Union and other members of the international community. South Korea is deeply grateful for their understanding and support.

Still North Korea remains suspicious of our intentions. It may perceive the engagement policy as a strategy to bring about its downfall or to absorb it. Speaking in this solemn Hall, I must reiterate the genuine, good-hearted intentions of the engagement policy. The Republic of Korea has no wish to undermine North Korea or to make it a part of us. All we seek is peaceful coexistence.

I make this appeal. Let us, South and North Korea, live in lasting peace. Let us together join the mainstream of history: reconciliation, cooperation and interdependence. I sincerely hope that North Korea responds to the warm sunshine we have been sending it with some warm sunshine of its own.

I also hope that the North Korean authorities will take steps to fundamentally address the chronic food shortage and other difficulties that have plagued the people in the North for many years. The problems require the continued interest and assistance of the international community. Countless children in the North are suffering and dying from starvation and malnutrition, stunted growth and disease. With their right to food and life irrevocably impaired, tens of thousands of North Koreans have fled the country in search of food.

The primary responsibility for redressing the situation lies with the North Korean authorities. They must face up to the enormity of the problems. We also hope that the international community will provide continued humanitarian assistance to North Korea.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has actively taken part in the humanitarian efforts to help the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are prepared to offer far more in terms of food and fertilizer, as well as assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's agricultural restructuring. We urge the North Korean authorities to join us in dialogue for cooperation on this and other matters.

North-East Asia, where the interests of the major Powers intersect, is an economic powerhouse and a region vital to global peace and stability. With the market economy taking root throughout the region, a new age of stability, cooperation and mutual prosperity is sprouting in North-East Asia. The countries of the region are becoming bound ever closer together in economic ties and interdependencies. Unhampered exchanges and cooperation are expanding far beyond the trade in goods and services to people-to-people contacts and other interactions in the fields of culture, sports, education and many others. Mutual understanding and appreciation is deepening.

To further the trend, North-East Asia requires adequate mechanisms to deal with transnational issues, such as environmental pollution, drug-trafficking, refugees, organized crime and public health. There is also a need for a region-wide channel of dialogue and cooperation to defuse tension and prevent conflict.

To enjoy a stable security environment and co-prosperity in the twenty-first century, the countries of North-East Asia must learn from the lessons of region-wide cooperation and integration in many other areas of the world. They must strengthen mutual trust by upgrading the mode and calibre of their dialogue and consultations. They should promptly set out to establish a dialogue forum where they can all engage in earnest exchanges of views and nurture the sense of community.

The Republic of Korea stands ready to cooperate closely with the other countries of the region to launch such a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation

encompassing all of North-East Asia. I urge the countries of the region to join in the efforts to translate this idea into reality.

Peace and co-prosperity in North-East Asia will certainly gain from the global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, in which the Republic of Korea has been an active participant. With the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), my country is now a party to all the key non-proliferation treaties. We call upon other countries that have yet to sign and ratify the CTBT to promptly do so, so that the Treaty can soon go into effect. We call upon all States to join in the non-proliferation efforts by acceding to all global regimes, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, aimed at combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

A priority task for the global community will be to successfully carry out the review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) slated for next year and to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. I urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a party to the NPT, to fulfil its responsibilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement and to cooperate with us to implement the 1991 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We are living in a single global community. Globalization has been good to the Republic of Korea. Without the open markets, interdependencies and instant information flow nurtured by globalization, we would not have been able to achieve the rapid economic development that we did. However, stuck in the expediencies fostered during the years of Government-driven quantitative growth, Korea neglected to strengthen the market rules in the national economy. We failed to realize that globalization requires constant efforts to reinforce the market rules — transparency, accountability, efficiency and productivity. As a result, Korea was struck by a severe economic crisis in 1997.

But now we are trying to make up for past neglect. During the past year and a half, we have been undertaking sweeping and intense reforms in the key sectors of society. The reforms have required painful restructuring and sacrifices, but we have been steady and firm in putting into practice the belief that trade and investment liberalization and the strengthening of market rules are the keys to sustained economic growth and prosperity.

A year ago, from this same rostrum, I spoke about the efforts of my Government and people to overcome the crisis, guided by the conviction in the parallel development of democracy and the free-market economy. Today, I am happy to report that the efforts have begun to pay off and the country is expected to achieve over 6 per cent economic growth this year, a dramatic turnaround from the -5.8 percent of last year. Other economic indicators also speak of a stable, recovering economy.

Korea has learned valuable lessons from the economic crisis. We are now keenly aware that free and fair competition and good governance are essential to sustainable economic development. We also realized that a system of social welfare based on human-resources development must be established to mitigate the painful consequences of the reforms. Applying those lessons in the reform drive, we are on our way to becoming a market economy with a human face.

Of course, in a globalized economy, crisis knows no borders and the efforts at preventing and coping with crisis must also extend beyond borders. In this regard, we welcome the discussions concerning the restructuring of the global financial architecture. For the discussions to be productive, the crisis-stricken countries and other emerging market economies should have extensive participation. Keeping track of the discussions for meaningful progress, we count on the continued cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods systems.

One consequence of globalization has been the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries and the increasing marginalization of the least developed ones. Unattended, the disparity will only grow in the twenty-first century of unlimited competition, becoming a risk factor that could endanger global stability and peace. There is a pressing need for a new paradigm of international development cooperation, whereby the chronic poverty and excessive debts besetting the developing countries and other related issues are taken as challenges to be overcome with the active input of all members of the global community.

Development is meaningless without a healthy population to reap the fruits. Thus, we welcome the joint initiative of the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization to establish the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and the Children's Vaccine Initiative. Doing its share in the

efforts to save the 9 million children of the world who are dying every year from diseases that can be prevented, the Republic of Korea has hosted the International Vaccine Institute since 1994. We hope the Institute will be able to work in close cooperation with the Global Alliance and the Vaccine Initiative.

In the half century since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, the United Nations has taken the lead in forging global mechanisms for the protection and advancement of human rights around the world. The principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights are now widely upheld. Human rights violations, wherever they may take place, are now considered a legitimate concern of the international community. Human rights has become a priority agenda of the post-cold-war global community. In the Republic of Korea, the Government of President Kim Dae Jung has made significant advances in the field of human rights. We have also been an active participant in the efforts of the United Nations and the global community to resolve concrete cases of human rights violations.

While we note the advances in human rights, we must not forget that a quarter of the world's population still struggles to survive in abject poverty. Poverty undermines human dignity and human rights. Poverty is fertile ground for conflict and dictatorship. Poverty alleviation should be incorporated as a key goal in the United Nations endeavours to advance human rights around the world. We wish to see the mainstreaming of human rights in all the programmes and activities of the United Nations further expanded and deepened. Furthermore, we believe this global body should strengthen its capacity for early warning and preventive action so as to forestall massive human rights violations and the outflow of refugees.

The task of advancing human rights has always benefited from the push and pull of civil society. It will be even more so in the new century as Governments and the United Nations work in closer alliance and cooperation with non-governmental organizations, research organizations and advocacy groups. Next month, some 3,000 non-governmental organization representatives will gather in Seoul to take part in the 1999 international conference of non-governmental organizations. Exploring the role of the non-governmental organizations in the twenty-first century global community, the meeting from October 11 to 15 should bring the United Nations system and civil society closer together.

Let us turn our attention to the situation in East Timor. The Republic of Korea applauded the Government of Indonesia for making the decision to let the people of East Timor choose their own fate. The will of the people, as unequivocally registered on 30 August, must be upheld. The violent repression of that will is a grave challenge to the basic principle of democracy and human decency. The atrocity must not be left unpunished and law and order must be restored in East Timor. The Indonesian Government has again shown wisdom and courage in accepting the multinational peacekeeping forces under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that peace is soon returned and that the will of the people for independence is fully implemented through the conjoined efforts of the Indonesian Government and the United Nations. The Republic of Korea will take part in the peacekeeping operations and will continue to do its share in the efforts to safeguard regional and global peace and stability.

The United Nations has much work to do in the twenty-first century. The Republic of Korea deeply appreciates the reforms introduced by the Secretary-General to enhance the responsiveness of the global body to new challenges. We welcome the designation of the fifty-fifth session next year as the Millennium Assembly to identify the challenges awaiting the global community in the twenty-first century. We hope the Millennium Assembly strengthens the global leadership of the United Nations for the new age.

In this regard, such thought-provoking concepts as global public goods, human security and global governance may serve to frame the discussions at the Millennium Assembly.

I look to the twenty-first century as the era of the United Nations. I sincerely hope to see the global body renew itself and fulfil its missions through continuous reforms and to enhance its effectiveness and democratic character. Recalling the lofty spirit that gave birth to the United Nations half a century ago, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Korea, I pledge our abiding support for the global body in its noble mission for peace and prosperity around the world.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Ortíz.

Mr. Ortíz (Ecuador)(*spoke in Spanish*): I take great pleasure in congratulating the President on his well-

deserved election, which honours him personally and his great country, Namibia. On behalf of the Ecuadorian Government and on my own behalf, allow me to greet him most cordially and wish him every measure of success.

I warmly welcome the three new members of this Organization, Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga, and congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the intelligent way with which he conducted the work of the previous session of the General Assembly.

The border conflict between Ecuador and Peru that had prevailed since the very foundation of our republics, during the first part of the last century, was concluded on 26 October 1998 by means of a negotiation process begun in February 1995. This historic event, reached by the signing of the peace agreement in Brasilia, allowed the two countries to change their relations entirely and to transform the conflict into peace and, now, to transform peace into development.

Immediately upon the signing of the peace agreement, Mr. Jamil Mahuad, President of the Republic of Ecuador, put an end to the acquisition of war materials, reduced mandatory military service and, in close collaboration with Ecuadorian soldiers, reoriented the action of the armed forces toward tasks linked to development and internal security.

The comprehensive peace formula, reached with the assistance of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States, included not only the delimitation of the border, but also a treaty on navigation and trade, a broad-ranging agreement on the integration of borders and the establishment of a commission on building trust and security, among several other peace measures.

In accordance with the agreement, Ecuador and Peru have established an institutional structure that is now fully operational in order to attain the goals of an ambitious programme that includes the construction of five bi-national roads, joint development of our river basins, the building of physical infrastructure and the achievement of a human development programme designed to improve the living standards of the residents along our borders, who during so many decades of stagnation in their territories were victims, paralysed by fear and uncertainty.

To reach this goal, we have combined our efforts, convinced, at the same time, that we will be able to count on international cooperation. We hope that the border between Ecuador and Peru will serve as an example of the fruits of peace for the world. We want to see highways instead of trenches, irrigation canals instead of fortifications, hospitals instead of combat airplanes and electric plants instead of missiles and anti-personal mines.

In the name of Ecuador, I call upon the international community, on each one of the member countries, on financial and development cooperation organizations and on non-governmental organizations to contribute their aid, small or large, to this new peaceful and friendly space our two Latin American nations have built.

Having resolved its long-standing border dispute, Ecuador reiterates its traditional commitment to continue a permanent search for mutual agreements through the peaceful settlement of disputes and its firm decision not to become involved in any international war conflict. Within the framework of these principles, Ecuador recognizes the gravity of the armed confrontation that is searing its neighbour the Republic of Colombia, but considers that fight to be of an internal nature. Hence, it fully supports the efforts of the Government of President Andrés Pastrana to reach peace by negotiating with the rebel groups in that country. In that regard, any intention to internationalize an armed conflict whose solution concerns only the people of Colombia could be counter-productive and dangerous.

The struggle for development and the efforts to combat poverty undertaken by Ecuador during the past year have been severely affected by multiple crises in the international arena and by natural disasters that strongly hit many places of the world, and Ecuador in particular. The violence of climatic phenomena makes it imperative to urgently implement a strategy for international cooperation to prevent the disastrous consequences of those natural disasters on the population, the economy and the environment. With the support of the United Nations, Ecuador has proposed the creation of an international research centre on the El Niño phenomenon that would contribute to improving the world capacity for prediction and early warning and to facilitate the adoption of protective and precautionary measures to mitigate the effects of the phenomenon.

The aftermath of the El Niño phenomenon cost the equivalent of one half of our annual export revenues. In addition, the severe impact of the sharp price deterioration of our main export products, particularly oil, has caused economic stagnation, the closure of production units and the rise of unemployment. The crisis in the financial markets of Asia and Latin America has

also spread its negative effects over our country, while the prosperity of other, developed areas did little to mitigate the effects of that crisis. Within that context of great difficulties, the conditions under which Ecuador renegotiated its foreign debt became extremely difficult to comply with. On 28 August 1999, the national Government used the legal mechanism of deferring for one month the payment of its Brady bonds debt service and at this time it is preparing to commence a process of restructuring these obligations that will enable it to share in a more equitable way the debt load among all the actors of this financial relationship.

In 1999, poverty affects 61.3 per cent of the Ecuadorian population. Last June the unemployment rate was 15.6 per cent. Four out of ten Ecuadorians have a daily income of less than $2, and two out of ten earn less than $1 per day. Global malnutrition affects more than 40 per cent of the children; one out of three do not complete the sixth grade, and 40 per cent of all children and adolescents are school drop-outs. These imbalances break social cohesion, limit the possibilities for the exercise of an effective democracy and reduce the validity of citizens' rights. The economic readjustment measures that the Government of Ecuador intends to apply will necessarily be conditioned by social development objectives, such as the reduction of poverty and malnutrition, the improvement of health indexes, the increase of access to better education, the reduction of unemployment and the increase of family income.

Ecuador strongly believes that market mechanisms stimulate competitiveness and efficiency, but also that the institutional framework within which these processes take place must be capable of correcting distortions, putting limits on financial speculation and contributing to putting in place more stable and predictable systems of pricing, so that the living conditions of millions upon millions of human beings are not put at risk, and the stability and longevity of democratic regimes are not threatened by social discontent and economic crises.

In Ecuador, President Jamil Mahuad and his Government have maintained democracy with a strong grip despite difficult circumstances. Social discontent from the contraction in output, natural disasters, the financial crisis, the drop in international prices for raw materials and commodities caused an increase in poverty and unleashed extensive manifestations of social discord.

In facing situations such as these, we need to have an institutional economic order that gives a way out, particularly for countries with small economies, which are the most vulnerable to and most likely to be affected by extreme economic crises.

On the eve of a new millennium, humankind is developing one scenario alone, a scenario not only of interdependence but also of globalization. In this global environment, all countries are involved in huge processes of market integration, liberalization of trade barriers, standardization of norms and adaptation and establishment of institutions so that they can cope.

Nevertheless, globalization has so far not generated an equal distribution of prosperity, scientific progress, human health or cultural benefits. Right now, more than ever, when humankind is a single whole, we must establish shared ways to preserve, first and foremost, human dignity and well-being, the basic requirements of the human being, which are based on security and human development.

One example of the effects of human insecurity are the great migratory waves that we are presently witnessing. Ecuador calls upon the General Assembly to orient cooperation strategies in terms of the human security perspective in dealing with shifts in human population that demand a better distribution of prosperity far from the extremes of opulence and destitution. Ecuador eagerly welcomes the new focus on providing a model for international policy including the notion of human security, especially at a time when the scourge of violence, drug trafficking, terrorism and environmental deterioration have become more acute and when we have witnessed armed conflicts around the world during the past year.

Combating transnational crime is a shared endeavour for all civilized peoples. In particular, controlling the traffic in drugs and illicit drug consumption warrants coordinated, universal action. Ecuador has made its contribution and is prepared to continue making its contribution towards this end. It has therefore acceded to many international treaties and undertaken many international obligations, which it has fulfilled faithfully.

Our country is looking forward to the Millennium Summit with great anticipation. The summit will be a historic opportunity for the community of nations at a time when the challenges of the twenty-first century oblige us to define and to affirm a common commitment

to a universal project of understanding and cooperation that will inspire the United Nations in the coming century.

The Millennium Round negotiations of the World Trade Organization, and other continental and regional rounds, should be processes that open up to the opportunities and challenges for creativity and effort and enable us to narrow the gap between the prosperity of just a few countries and the poverty of the great majority.

Ecuador firmly believes in open markets, economic integration, foreign investment and strengthening the multilateral trading system. For this reason it has worked within the Andean Community on improving relationships with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the European Union on negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and on its growing links with the Pacific basin, but it believes also that these processes must not ignore the individual features of the smaller countries and must strike a balance that will enable them to achieve, soon, an international system that is equitable and based on solidarity.

Ecuador was the second country in Latin America to promulgate a national human rights plan, and it did so from a broad-based and democratic perspective. The plan was conceived and prepared on the basis of a consultation process in which civil society and the State participated fully. This fact has earned special recognition from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which described the Ecuadorian plan as a model for other countries.

Our country gives national priority to the project entitled "Towards a culture of peace". In this context, under a presidential initiative, Ecuador is promoting wide-ranging activities linked to international efforts in accordance with the United Nations culture of peace project and the proclamation of the Year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

Over the past year the international community has witnessed an aggravation of regional conflicts: war has left deep scars in various parts of the world. In this context, the United Nations has had to play a special role in resolving international conflicts, and its concerted and decisive action has enabled it to resolve some of them successfully. Nevertheless, strengthening our world Organization's activities in this field must be carried out in such a way that all measures taken under the Charter follow its principles faithfully so that the United Nations keeps the necessary international credibility and continues to be the legitimate mouthpiece and manager for collective action to maintain international peace and security.

As a party to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, and given that it has been directly affected by the problem of anti-personnel mines, the elimination of these weapons of war is of particular interest for Ecuador. Since the signing of the peace agreement with Peru, our two countries have begun removing and destroying the mines along the border. We are sure that the international community will continue to offer its cooperation in carrying out our two countries' demining programme. On behalf of Ecuador, I thank the States and organizations that have contributed or pledged to contribute to this cause.

In the light of the realities of the situation facing humankind, Ecuador reaffirms its unwavering support for the multilateral system and, consequently, for the United Nations which, since its creation, has been the universal meeting place of all nations to work for the ideals and goals shared by all peoples inspired by the purposes and principles of the Organization. Ecuador draws its inspiration from the ideal of achieving a world of peace and freedom, of social justice and development, of fruitful coexistence of peoples and nations, a world in which Governments work together to solve the complex problems besetting humankind.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, Her Excellency the Honourable Billie Miller.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The Barbados delegation shares the confidence expressed in his leadership and offers its full cooperation as he presides over our deliberations.

Let me also warmly commend his predecessor, my friend and colleague, Mr. Didier Opertti, Foreign Minister of Uruguay, for his outstanding stewardship of the Assembly during the last year and for the vision and direction he gave to the ongoing work of the United Nations.

We are delighted to welcome to our family of nations Tonga, Kiribati and Nauru, which are, like

Barbados, small island developing States and members of the Commonwealth and also of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. We have long enjoyed good relations with our sister Pacific islands and wish to assure the new Member States of our continued friendship and solidarity.

As we reflect on the twentieth century, we see a period remarkable for its contradictions. We see, on the one hand, astounding developments in many fields of human endeavour and, on the other, national and international conflicts, resulting in mass destruction of human life and infrastructure as well as the almost irreversible compromising of the ecological system. It is evident that if as nations we refuse to use our accumulated knowledge and experience, these contradictions will be carried well into the twenty-first century, making it even more difficult for us to face and overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

One of the most serious of these challenges is that of the concept of globalization. The proponents of this ideology, which embraces trade liberalization and global governance, wish us to believe that it is a natural and logical development in international relations. It is not. In many of its important aspects it is an imposition. One has only to examine the bases of the clamour for trade liberalization to become aware of this.

Trade liberalization assumes that small States compete with larger, stronger, more experienced countries on the same terms, or become mere satellites in a neo-colonial sphere. No nation, large or small, would willingly accept a satellite role. The international community must therefore come to recognize that within the context of trade liberalization free trade must import fair trade: trade in goods and services that have been produced and supplied under conditions respectful of the rights and dignity of the labour force; respectful of the preservation of the environment, and guaranteeing fair prices that provide returns to the supplier.

Barbados and the Caribbean are confronting serious challenges in the effort to remain viable economies as traditional systems of cooperation between individual States and groups of nations are supplanted by the modern concepts of supranational interests and of globalization. To fully grasp the enormity of the adjustment process now facing Caribbean economies one must first appreciate that the Caribbean is perhaps the region which under the original post-colonial regime enjoyed the highest level of trade preferences with Europe.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has evolved as the dominant forum for the reform of the world trading system, but it is now evident that more democratic, participatory and transparent systems are needed to protect the interests of the smaller and more vulnerable members of that Organization. For surely the WTO cannot be meant to operate as a weapon of oppression in a new millennium. Surely it cannot be acceptable in a just world that the new trade ethic should derive solely from the rigid application of technical rules.

Our new system is clearly seriously flawed when a dispute between two powerful transatlantic partners can be settled in a political vacuum which totally ignores the very real and disastrous consequences it will inevitably unleash on the economies of a fragile group of small States. This is certainly not globalization with a human face.

And so it must be appreciated that the interdependence associated with globalization is a two-sided coin. Just as it is claimed that the benefits of free trade will be enjoyed by all, so too will we all suffer from the repercussions of failed economies, unable to cope with the impact of global trade liberalization.

In the Caribbean region, we are haunted by the prospect of failed societies. Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados is particularly concerned, and has repeatedly warned of this possibility. Recently he made the following observation:

> "The economic decay in some economies has been so severe and corrosive as to set in train social and political disorder which, unchecked, will create a new Caribbean species of 'failed society'."

Indeed, we have already seen how the dislocation of some States, whether large, or small and marginalized, can impact negatively on the world's most developed economies. When the global system economically disenfranchises large numbers of the world's population, we should not be surprised that their hopeless circumstances might propel them towards the underworld of transnational crime.

The unique nature and scope of vulnerabilities of small economies cannot be disputed. Barbados strongly reiterates the call for the recognition and adoption of vulnerability indices to assist in determining access to development financing.

The United Nations has a critical role to play as the defender of the right of all States, regardless of size or influence, to voice their concerns. As a forum for constructive consensus-building in an atmosphere of free and open dialogue the United Nations is even more relevant in an era characterized by complex negotiations and supranational interests dominated by a powerful few.

As a community of nations we have one common factor that unquestionably unites us all. We share one Earth. The need to sustain the Earth's oceans, seas and the environment in general is undeniable. Indeed, this represents one of the greatest challenges to globalization. As a small island developing State, Barbados has nurtured a strong commitment to the implementation of practices that seek to ensure sustainable development in all aspects of our lives.

The dedication of Barbados to the promotion of global sustainable development has been affirmed by our active participation in numerous international negotiations devoted to these issues. It is also demonstrated by our vigorous efforts to foster a shared vision to reverse the conventional wisdom of the past, which sacrificed environmental concerns in blind pursuit of that other ideology of economic growth. That shared vision will be as relevant in the new century as it was when the international community assembled in Barbados in 1994 for the first United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Barbados is proud, as is the entire region, of the progress made by the small island developing States in fulfilling their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. At the national level, our Government has successfully forged greater links with civil society, including the private sector and labour, in the preparation of our environmental policies and action plans.

The just-concluded special session to review and appraise the Barbados Programme of Action drew attention once more to the serious way in which the small island developing States have accepted their responsibility to integrate sustainable development practices into all aspects of their economic and social activity. We trust that the outcomes of this review will be fully implemented by the international community.

The Caribbean Basin States will shortly be addressing in this forum their interest in working towards the international designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. While we acknowledge that there is work still to be done to fully develop and implement this concept, we are also firmly convinced of the validity of our efforts, which we believe will ultimately lead to an integrated approach to the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea and to the protection of its resources.

Significant progress has been achieved over the last decade to bring peace and stability to the hemisphere of the Americas. Barbados subscribes to the philosophy of inclusion and constructive engagement and strongly believes that these must be our guiding principles as we strive to banish the last vestiges of the cold war from our region. Like other countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we have developed a productive and cooperative relationship with our neighbour Cuba. We are convinced that Cuba has a significant role to play in our region, and we view its reintegration into hemispheric affairs as an urgent necessity. The continuation of the unilateral economic embargo against Cuba runs contrary to that spirit and is out of tune with the significant efforts of engagement being practiced by the remaining Governments of this hemisphere. We urge the suspension of this anachronistic measure.

The world still awaits the peace that was promised when the Charter of the United Nations was adopted, and that was confidently reproclaimed at the end of the cold war. As a small democratic State, Barbados is ever-conscious of the peaceful climate which it has enjoyed since independence, in 1966. The political stability of Barbados and the Caribbean region, which has facilitated and fostered economic and political development, must never be taken for granted. It is a therefore a source of great distress to all peace-loving people that despite all the wonderful technological and scientific advances we have made over the centuries of this millennium, we are entering into the third millennium still carrying the baggage of ancient ethnic and tribal conflicts and of nationalistic rivalries. Today, crises that threaten the very existence of some States remain of deep concern to the international community.

Barbados shares the profound anguish and suffering of the people of Kosovo and was appalled by the barbaric slaughter and the massive displacement of innocent people and the destabilizing effect this has had on neighbouring States. We support the role that the peacekeeping forces are playing in restoring order to Kosovo and providing the conditions for the return of the displaced population to their homes.

We wish to reiterate, together with the members of the Caribbean Community, that military intervention should be authorized by the United Nations Security Council. As a small, defenceless State, we are uncomfortable with the notion that intervention can take place without the prior authorization of the United Nations Security Council.

We welcome the restoration of democracy and the return of civilian government to Nigeria and look forward to its renewed participation in the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government conference.

We hope that concerted action will continue among the parties involved to implement the Lomé Agreement and to bring a final peace to the suffering people of Sierra Leone.

We are also heartened by the decision to mobilize a United Nations peacekeeping force into East Timor to end the abominable infringement of the basic human and civil rights of the people of that country. It is intolerable that in this so-called civilized age people can still find themselves persecuted and terrorized because they vote according to their conscience and in keeping with their vision of their own future.

We are following what is taking place in the Middle East and hope that the conditions now exist to resolve all outstanding issues and so bring about a lasting peace throughout that region.

The multifaceted areas of the sustainable development process demand a holistic approach. No longer can we service only the economy, the agricultural sector or any one sector at the expense of others. The value of building strong social institutions becomes more relevant when placed against the backdrop of globalization and its effects. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that social rights are safeguarded.

Barbados places strong emphasis on social development. We are convinced that more needs to be done at the international level to ensure that this emphasis is maintained. It must be understood that economic development cannot be sustained unless a framework for overall development is in place. The alleviation of poverty and the promotion of gender equality, democracy and the rights of the child are issues that must be simultaneously addressed.

The first World Summit for Social Development, which was held in 1995, gave an international focus to issues such as poverty eradication, full employment, social integration, gender equality and universal access to education. Barbados remains committed to the maintenance of a sustainable economic, political and social environment that will enable its citizens to achieve advanced social development. In furtherance of this objective, the Government of Barbados has created a Ministry of Social Transformation that will be the main focal point for all social and welfare services, with emphasis on poverty alleviation — indeed, eradication — and support for the disadvantaged and the disabled.

At the international level, Barbados welcomes and supports the special session that will take place during the next year. This will provide an opportunity to review the actions that have been taken to give effect to the decisions adopted at the World Summit for Social Development. It is anticipated that this special session will lead to a renewal of international commitment to fulfil the objectives of the 1995 Copenhagen Summit. The matter takes on greater urgency when it is realized that, four years after the United Nations Summit, international and economic crises have led to a reversal of the gains made in social development.

One of the main deterrents to sustainable development remains the illicit traffic in narcotics, which is a major concern to the Governments of the Americas. This transnational phenomenon is one of the more adverse consequences of globalization, which has brought in its wake the associated evils of money laundering, arms trafficking and violent crime. Geography places the Caribbean in the direct path of this phenomenon as a transit point of illegal drugs. It must be borne in mind that the illegal drug trade undermines democracy and can eventually lead to the destruction of the nation-State. This circumstance has compelled the Caribbean countries to give the highest priority to the development of cooperative efforts at drug interdiction, demand-reduction and the containment of transnational crime.

Barbados currently serves as a focal point in these regional efforts, which enjoy the support of the European Union, the United States of America, Canada and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. We will continue to play an active role in support of all coordinated efforts at the regional and international levels to combat the narco-trafficking threat and the dangers posed to the security of the small States of the Caribbean.

Barbados is firmly committed to the United Nations Organization. We have supported all constructive efforts at reform, but we insist that the Organization can remain viable only if all Members scrupulously honour their financial commitments. We also believe that a healthy balance must be maintained between the United Nations peacekeeping focus and its developmental mandate. In this regard, we continue to be concerned at the declining funding available to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies, resulting in a diminished capacity on their part to carry out their important mandate. We reiterate the importance of the work of these agencies in support of the national efforts of developing countries to achieve economic and social progress.

We very much value the work of UNDP and of the United Nations system as a whole. As a net contributing country, Barbados is eager to enter into a new partnership with UNDP that can make a significant contribution to our efforts to achieve the next critical phase of our development, the transition to a globalized economy.

In appreciation of the United Nations contribution over the years, the Government of Barbados has agreed to construct a permanent home for all United Nations offices located in Bridgetown and servicing the Eastern Caribbean. To this end, we expect to commence shortly the construction of the United Nations common premises in Bridgetown.

The new millennium brings with it a sense of giddy expectation, a passion for renewal and the tendency to believe that things will miraculously change for the better overnight. We must not delude ourselves into thinking that the fifty-fifth, the fifty-sixth or even the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will take place in an environment any less complex and challenging than our gathering here today. What we do know is that we may not be expected to complete the task, but then, neither are we at liberty to abstain from it.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.